

## GENERAL NOTES.

The proper Generic Name of the Loons.—Formerly, and still to a large extent, the Loons were referred to the genus *Colymbus* Linn., 1758. Brisson, however, in 1760, restricted *Colymbus* to the Grebes (cf. Stejneger, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. V, 1882, 42), in which sense it is used in the A. O. U. Check-List, where *Urinator* Cuvier, 1799, is employed for the Loons. There is, however, a perfectly tenable earlier name for the Loons in *Gavia* Forster, 1788. Why it has been so long overlooked seems unaccountable, as it is so well defined that its pertinency is beyond question.

Forster (Enchirid. Hist. Nat. 1788, 38) clearly distinguished the Grebes as *Colymbus*, as follows: “*rostrum* subulatum, compressum. *Pedes* lobati, *Tibiae* postice carinato-serratae.” Next follows his genus *Uria*, for the Auks, and then *Gavia*, characterized as follows: “*rostrum* subulatum, compressum. *Pedes* palmati, tetradactyli.” This in itself is unequivocally diagnostic, and taken in connection with the groups that precede and follow *Gavia*, the conclusion that *Gavia* is here proposed for the Loons is irresistible.

The main synonymy of the genus *Gavia* is as follows:

*Colymbus* LINN. Syst. Nat. ed. 10, I, 1758, 135 (in part).

*Gavia* FORSTER, Enchirid. Hist. Nat. 1788, 38.

*Urinator* CUVIER, Anat. Comp. I, 1799, Tabl. ii.

The Loons of the A. O. U. Check-List will therefore stand as follows:

7. *Gavia imber* (GUNN.).
8. *Gavia adamsii* (GRAY).
9. *Gavia arctica* (LINN.).
10. *Gavia pacifica* (LAWR.).
11. *Gavia lumme* (GUNN.).

It also becomes necessary to change the name of the family from *Urinatoridae* to *GAVIIDÆ*.—J. A. ALLEN, *Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., New York City*.

*Uria lomvia*, an Addition to the Avifauna Columbiana.—The recent erratic movement of this species extended also to the Potomac at this point, and adds another family to our list. Six specimens, all birds of the season were obtained in this locality, as follows:

No. 1. Dec. 14, 1896. The first seen at the market.

“ 2. “ 20, “ Occoquan Creek, Potomac River.

“ 3. “ 22, “ ♂, Potomac River, between Washington and Alexandria.

No. 4. Dec. 27, 1896. ♀, Potomac River, between Washington and Alexandria.

No. 5. Dec. 28, 1896. ♀, Potomac River, between Washington and Alexandria.

No. 6. Jan. 1, 1897. ♂, Potomac River, between Washington and Alexandria.

All but the second were purchased from various stands on Virginia Ave., N. W., between 9th and 10th Sts., and were found on careful inquiry to have been killed by gunners at points between Washington and Alexandria. The second was killed by a gunner, who gave the bird to George Ayers of Alexandria, Va., who sent it to the Smithsonian Institution, where it now forms No. 154200 of the U. S. N. M. Collection. It was said to have been the only one seen. Nos. 3, 4, and 6 form Nos. 2284, 2286 and 2289 of my collection, and the 5th is in the collection of Mr. William Palmer of this place. — PAUL BARTSCH, *Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.*

**Note on *Pagophila alba*.** — The attempt made (Pr. U. S. Nat. Mus. V, June, 1882, p. 39) to supersede the established generic name *Pagophila* by the derelict term "*Gavia*" has been temporarily effectual through the adoption of *Gavia* by the A. O. U. on the strength of Dr. Stejneger's misrepresentation, but is not likely to prove more successful than some other blunders that could be named. *Gavia* is traceable back to Pliny, as equivalent to Greek *λάρος*, Lat. *larus*, a gull; and is said to be still an Italian word for 'gull.' Passing by its use by Moehring in 1752 as equivalent to *Larus*, and its employ by Brisson in 1760 as a term in the polynomial designations of various Gulls—for these instances do not affect the nomenclatural point I raise—we come to *Gavia*, Forster, *Enchirid. Nat. Hist.* 1788, p. 38. This is said by Newton (Dict., p. 310) to be a genus of water birds, with no type named; but according to this high authority, Forster's "diagnosis indicates that he meant what is most commonly called *Colymbus*." There are various other later applications of *Gavia* as a generic name of certain Gulls and Plovers, notably one by Boie, *Isis*, 1822, p. 563, to a genus containing *Larus eburneus* and *L. rissa*; but Boie's employ of *Gavia* in this connection is voided by our rules in consequence of Forster's prior use of *Gavia* for a genus of Divers. Waiving other objections to *Gavia* which Mr. Howard Saunders has indicated (*Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* XXV, 1896, p. 301) and Professor Newton has specified (*l. c.*), we see that Forster's *Gavia*, 1788, debars Boie's *Gavia*, 1822. *Pagophila* Kaup, 1829, is thus in order as the tenable generic name of the Ivory Gull, *P. alba*. It is to be hoped that the next edition of the Check-List will correct the error into which the A. O. U. has been misled by relying upon unreliable evidence. — ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

**Arrival of Terns at Penikese Island in 1897.** — Penikese Island, May 6, 1897. Up to last night no Terns had been noted in this locality. Early this morning they appeared in quite a considerable body. They all departed the next day, returning in a day or two; their numbers being greatly augmented. The first egg was observed on the afternoon of May 23. No more were discovered until the 25th, when four were noted. On May 29, 30, 31, quite a number of nests with one egg each, several with